The Commonweal

April 7, 1950

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Where the Author Meets the Critics

Walter Kerr

The McCarthy Muddle

Christopher Emmet

Harold Laski's Death

Francis Downing

VOLUME LI | 15c | NUMBER 26

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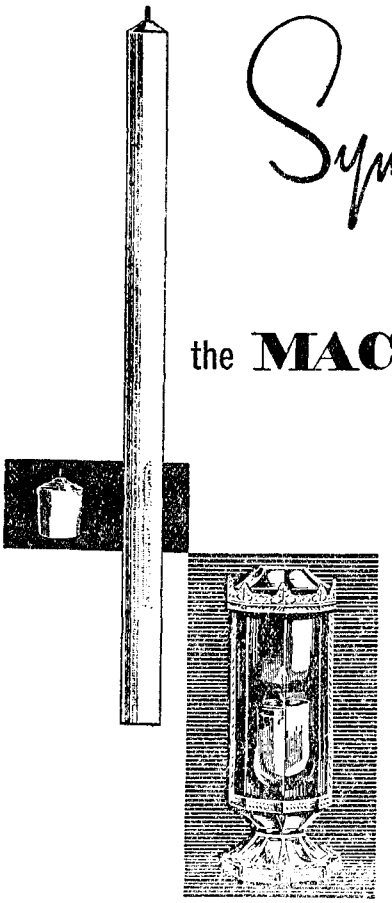

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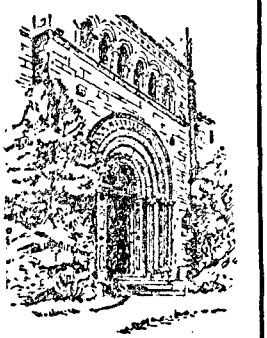

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APRIL 14 — EDUCATION

MAY 5 — SPRING BOOKS

Published weekly, printed and copyrighted, 1950, in the U. S. A., by The Commonweal Publishing Co., Inc., 386 Fourth Ave., New York 16, N. Y. MUrray Hill 3-9685. Entered as second-class matter, February 9, 1934, at the post office at New York, N. Y. under the act of March 3, 1879. U. S. and Canada, $7 a year; Foreign, $8. Single copies, 15c.

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The Commonweal

WEEK BY WEEK

A Question of Priority

AN inquiring reporter, lucky enough to run into an unbroken string of thoughtful individuals, would almost inevitably get a common answer to his question about the next decade's prospects for the United States. Whether or not they adverted to the many still-unsolved major domestic problems, the men and women interviewed would all agree that it is our unresolved conflict with Russia—and the possibility that it may end up in an atomic war—that is the one alarming element in our future. Otherwise there is reason for confidence in our being able to muddle through in some fashion.

There is one single fact that makes it impossible to view the way the world is presently organized with anything but anguished concern: the plight of the millions of victims trapped behind the iron curtain and the threatened freedoms of millions of others living precariously nearby. These are things which outweigh all other political considerations.

The necessity for building up a strong Western Europe puts the continuation of Marshall Plan expenditures on the full scale contemplated (the sums grow smaller each fiscal year) in an urgent category. That is why there is so little point in saying that such approporiations should now be cut, the way all other appropriations must be cut, for economy's sake. If the debate were to go no further than the economic plane, the whole sum of three billions to be spent in 1950-1951 in aid for Western Europe is as nothing when compared to the cost of financing another war.

This is the third year Congress has engaged in heated debate over the extent of Marshall aid. The second year of ECA operation has three months to run and already industrial production for Western Europe is twenty percent above the pre-war figure, while farm production is almost up to what it was before the war. No one denies that ECA is primarily responsible. One fifth of the sum asked of Congress has been earmarked for a European payments union which is expected to give the nations involved a tremendous economic boost; the projected items accounting for the rest of the three billions represent requests of the various recipient nations already pared to a minimum. Further cuts, made in Washington, will simply render a going program that much less effectual.

But Senator Vandenberg from his sick-bed has thrown the whole question into its much wider perspective. Economically we have a big investment to protect. Politically and culturally we form with Western Europe a definite if variegated community of nations, mutually dependent and at one in our opposition to the slave conceptions of the Soviets. The good of all demands that the program for the coming year be enacted in its entirety, and we must start thinking about the nature and extent of our cooperation after 1952 when the present recovery plan shall have run its course. To regain what we have lost in the cold war in recent months and to build up an Atlantic union strong and cohesive enough to discourage any further aggression, the United States is compelled, for one thing, to continue ECA operations full-scale. Our solidarity with our like-minded fellow-men, not to mention our own personal security, demands no less.

Agreeing to Disagree

FATHER Vincent J. Flynn is president of the College of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. A year ago he was elected president of the Association of American Colleges. Speaking to the Association in convention recently, Father Flynn said he was proud to be its president, for more than the conventional reasons. "I think it is a tribute to the fair-mindedness of the membership of the Association, which is predominantly Protestant, that they should have chosen for their president a priest of the Catholic Church."

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• NEXT WEEK •

MILTON MAYER writes of "The Vestige of God" in American education. Even in the nominally denominational schools of his acquaintance, God is an elective, and nobody takes Him. There are left the truly denominational schools.

"In these we find the vestige of God. But this very vestige serves as a handicap . . . to the extent that they nourish the vestige of God, they will, I think, progressively lose their status as educational institutions. Since they are now handicapped, they might as well go whole hog."

The priest's address found its way into the *Congressional Record* for March 6. The *Record,* as anyone knows who has ever plunged into its jam-packed pages, is a wonderful collection of wind and wisdom. Only the studious professional or the extremely conscientious citizen is hardy enough to battle his way through it every day. Father Flynn's address is found in the Appendix, in the back of the book. It would be a shame if it were left unread, gone with the wind; because his words have very special significance today when religious tensions in the nation are ever-growing and, as in the case of the education bills, calm disagreement and reasoned argument between Americans of different religions are disappearing before the onslaught of souped-up emotionalism, innuendo and mutual suspicion.

There are some who would destroy the bitterness of religious controversy by imposing indifference or uniformity, in the name of unity. Father Flynn cannot go along with them. The answer to why men are divided and separated, he thinks, lies in the nature of man. Men are weak and imperfect in intellect and will: the truth is by no means immediately evident to all. He quotes Aristotle to show that very few men consistently follow reason rather than selfish passion in choosing their goals. Unity among Americans of different beliefs would be ideal, of course, but to impose a monolithic pattern on all would be to do violence to human nature itself. Still unity is the thing desired, the thing we should be working for. Father Flynn asks what kind of unity and how it can be achieved.

> I think we may as well face the fact that we are not likely to get the whole race, or our whole nation, or our whole city, to agree on anything. . . . If we are ever to have one world, or anything like it, we must, I think, first accept the fact of diversity, and, secondly, we must attack the problem with charity as our basic attitude. . . . Life, as someone has said, consists in a series of relationships with other persons. The relationships are not between ideas; they are between human beings. Now it is quite possible for me to love a man while hating his ideas. . . . You will find no real unity in a body of men without charity. Differences and disagreements will exist even in the best of families. But I appeal to your experience: where love is present, agreement can usually be reached—at least in the field of action, if not that of opinion. Where love is not present, no unity is likely.

Father Flynn deplores unseemly political and economic disputes, but bad feeling in the realm of religion troubles him most of all. The newly developed antagonisms between Catholics and

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Protestants in the U. S. have, he says, set brother against brother and have given serious scandal to the unbeliever. What does he recommend as a program to overcome this?

> The program that men of good will have always followed; the program that even civilized pagans followed, at least to a degree. We shall not go about picking quarrels about doctrinal differences, but we shall try to cooperate with each other in matters that affect the common good. I do not mean that doctrinal differences are unimportant. They are important, unless truth is unimportant.

But it is not so much doctrinal differences themselves which are the basis of our religious quarrels as the feeling of one body that its interests are being threatened by the other, or the fear that they may in the future be so threatened. Father Flynn is specific: "Some Protestants in the U. S. fear that if Catholics ever became strong enough to do so, they would deny freedom of worship to persons of other faiths. And some Catholics have a paralyzing fear of certain Protestant organizations."

> Now there is historical reason for fear, I admit, in both instances. For various reasons, civil liberties have not developed throughout the world as they have in the U. S. But, to my mind, the important question is this: Are we in this country likely to follow exactly the same pattern in human relations as that which has been followed elsewhere? . . . I doubt whether in the foreseeable future, any responsible religious body would wish to enslave another. For that would mean that the majority of Americans would be reversing their thinking completely; and it takes a long time indeed for people to make such a shift.

Father Flynn finds reason for optimism in the new theoretical, philosophical approach to the problem of religious differences. In contrast to those who argued baldly in the past that error had no rights, which is logically defensible as an abstract idea, some modern Catholic thinkers have been pointing out that error always inheres in persons and that persons always have rights; moreover that the individual conscience must be respected even when it is in error.

> The doctrine of the rights of the erroneous conscience is, of course, recognized in the prevalent attitude toward conscientious objectors to military service; most people regard the position of the objectors as erroneous, but still respect their right to act according to their convictions. The same doctrine underlies a legislation in some churches, among them my own, which forbids members to baptize a person against his will, even though these churches regard the person in objective error if he does not wish to be baptized.

Father Flynn addressed his remarks to professional educators, but his challenge to achieve unity through charity vitally concerns all Americans.

Integration: East and West

UNITED STATES policy in reconstructing Germany can move in one of two directions: towards making Germany an independent and economically viable state, or towards making her economically and politically a part of a European federation. The latter course is easier to talk about and harder to accomplish, but it is the course which has a sensible place in the whole pattern of Western reconstruction.

The fact at the heart of the problem is that Western Germany is a fragment of a nation. To balance essential imports without Russian-occupied Germany, the Western section will have to export more than all Germany did in 1938—and then she was the third greatest trader of all the world's export countries. Chancellor Adenauer's recent bid for unification stands almost no chance of acceptance in the East, but it can be an immensely valuable propaganda lever, and is evidence for the suppressed anti-Communists of Eastern Germany that they are not abandoned. Russia will not permit the free election Dr. Adenauer demanded, when the Communists would not have a chance for more than a quarter of the vote. The Communist strategy is for unity, certainly, but unity to be gained by constant pressure "spontaneously" coming from the East Germans, with eventually a seizure of power. (It is reported likely that there will be another blockade of Berlin in the fall, imposed this time by the East German government.) The Russians have a marvelous technique for aggression from within, and only open Western strength in Berlin is likely to counter a coup.

To attempt to make the free section of Germany a semi-permanent political and economic unit, would be to keep Germany out of step with the West's over-all policy. We want a European federation, and Germany should be a part of it. Integrated into the European economy, part of a continental payments union, the German economic problem would be simplified even if it would be far from solved. As part of the federation, the German people would have a part which they could play fully and constructively in the affairs of Europe.

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Aid Refused to Co-op Housing

THE rule of thumb for telling how much of a home you could afford used to be astonishingly simple. What you paid for your dwelling space each month had to be kept within the precise amount of a man's weekly wage.

Perhaps for some brackets the old ratio still holds in a rough sort of fashion, but inflation and the income tax have thrown things out of whack. The new chart which the Federal Housing Administration is about to bring out as a homeseeker's guide makes things somewhat more complicated. To begin with, you use your monthly income minus federal income tax as the basis. Then, the percentage of family income needed for housing drops sharply as splendor of residence and extent of pay increase. More than a third of the family net income must be figured for a home in the $8,000 class, the five-room job that is within the range of the family living on two hundred dollars a month. But by the time you have reached the ten thousand a year class and can buy "a spacious $25,000 home," your housing costs will fall to one-fifth of your income.

Clearly the middle income bracket is a place where rent—or interest and amortization—is a terrific drain on the family purse. No wonder, to quote *US News,* that, with homes still in excessive demand, thousands of American families "already are buying homes at prices that represent what officials regard as real risks—for lenders and buyers."

The fact that so many American middle-income groups live perforce in the shadow of the sheriff is one reason that the defeat of the Administration's cooperative housing plan is unfortunate. The three percent interest contemplated would have represented as much as a one-third saving for the individual householder over FHA rates. The defeat of this provision was, however, hailed everywhere in conservative circles as good restraint upon the State, and a sound step from the viewpoint of economizing.

Yet the idea of special assistance in this vital area for lower middle income groups is not likely to die. The pressure of bills for installment buying, continuing high prices of food and clothing and recurring outlays for education, leisure-time activities and medical care will see to that. Continued pressures on modest family budgets will lead to new versions of the idea of soundly backed low-interest government housing loans to nonprofit groups. The key place construction holds in the maintenance of our economy will be recalled as unemployment mounts.

Full House

THE other day the Census Bureau, jumping off to a fast start, sent out a few advance scouts to reconnoiter conditions on the door-to-door circuit. One young operative properly identified himself to a housewife and she, in no wise ruffled, responded: "Oh my. Well try and make it fast, won't you? I have a cake in the oven."

Reminded by this, as we are, that you shouldn't underestimate the resistance of a woman, we are reminded, too, that the business of counting the population in this country is not the desperately serious thing it is in a country like Japan. Mr. Juitsu Kitaoka, a Japanese population expert, informs us that the population of his country has increased from 78 millions in 1945 to 83 millions today and that the figure goes up at the rate of 1¾ millions a year (there are well over 500 people to the square mile on the four main islands of Japan; there are about 48 in the U.S.).

He has a solution for over-crowding: first, allow Japan "free access to world trade" so that she can import food and raise living standards and second, practice birth control. He adds:

> Those who don't like birth control, such as the Catholics, say that emigration and transfer of unused land are the best solutions. That is a dream. If the population of Japan increases at the present rate, I'm afraid it will be very difficult for Japan to achieve a self-supporting economy, and we might be obliged to ask help from United States taxpayers for long years to come.

Although it is more accurate to say that Catholics oppose only unnatural methods of population control, it is true that when, for natural, moral and theological reasons, we do not believe in, and discourage among others, the practice of artificial birth control, we incur a corresponding responsibility to do something about over-population. Japanese population pressure, always an inducement to expansion and war in the Far East, is a complex matter than can be solved only if it is seen as part of the over-all situation in Asia. For that reason alone, our foreign policy in that area, still a piecemeal affair as it has been for years, needs to be re-formulated and seen in the long view as one pattern: a plan coordinating South Asian, Japanese and Indian food imports and trade, relieving hunger and raising standards all around. Buying off Communism is not enough. There are millions of human beings in Asia who have a right to life and security and we should know that nothing less will do for them.

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Where the Author Meets the Critics

Walter Kerr

THE Catholic who would deal with the arts at the present time may think it necessary to turn himself into a schizophrenic. Whether he is a creative writer of books or plays, or a critic attempting to evaluate them, he is often expected to operate on mutually contradictory levels, keeping his mind in a flexibly split condition.

On the one hand his most respected mentors among Thomistic philosophers assure him that art is a thing made, not a thing done, and hence not subject to moral evaluation. The artifact, being incapable of intention, decision, or any voluntarism whatever, cannot commit a sin and cannot be judged as though it had, or were going to. The only scale of values which can be applied to a work of art, considered as a work of art, are those pertaining to its nature—aesthetic values. The only legitimate question is simply: *Is* it a work of art? Just as one does not speak of an immoral chair or an immoral automobile, one ought not to speak of another made thing, an artifact, as an immoral book or play.

On the other hand, this is just how much of what is called Catholic criticism does speak of books and plays. The pulpit attacks "immoral shows," the Legion of Decency ratings read "morally objectionable in part," *Books on Trial* means that they are on trial morally, and the habits of the Catholic book-reading and playgoing laity have been generally formed by these media. When I made a lecture tour among Catholic organizations recently, not a single question was asked me regarding the artistic merits of anything. The only questions were moral questions, morally phrased. I think it is fair enough to say that, among rank-and-file Catholics, the moral evaluation of art is the only evaluation now being made.

When one takes this seeming contradiction between philosophy and practice to a priest, or to a philosopher, he meets with a great deal of hedging. Yes, it is true that a thing made is not capable of moral action, and hence cannot be praised or condemned for moral quality; yet on the other hand there are grave dangers involved, people being what they are, etc., etc. One gathers that philosophy is all right for the philosophers as long as they do not invade the field of practice, and that it would be better if these things, however true, were not made too public. Fear is the keynote of all this. Those who are responsible for the moral guidance of men have an honest fear that if art were ever given its autonomy, were ever allowed to be judged by its own appropriate standards, it would somehow run off with the whole kit and caboodle of the Christian body.

The fact that the same kind of unphilosophic fear has not been applied to other made things, such as the automobile, does not seem to cut any ice. It can be pointed out that with the development of the comfortable rear seat in motor cars there has been an increased opportunity for certain types of promiscuity. Here are grave dangers, people being what they are. Yet we have not been treated to any moral ratings of Buicks, and not even the Cadillac with the leopard-skin seat covers has been found "objectionable in part."

Of course, the moralist concerns himself with the artifact and not the automobile because within the artifact there is frequently, if not almost always, some depiction of sin. And no matter what incidental occasions of sin may be provided by an automobile, it has other uses which are primary and which are considered to be more important than its dangers. Because art has no such other uses, its concern with sin seems gratuitous. And the proposition that the reflection of sin may in some part contribute to the beauty of the artifact, and hence to the proper pleasure of mankind, seems unimportant if not downright untrue. To the average moralist, a work of beauty—unlike the automobile—is never more important than its incidental dangers.

One must have great sympathy for the priest in this situation. His duty is to concern himself with prudence, and if he succeeds in prudently guiding all who come to him in his lifetime, it will not really matter very much if he has ignored or helped to destroy the norms for evaluating art, and the art itself as a consequence. The prudence *is* more important.

WALTER KERR *is a member of the drama school faculty at Catholic University and the author of several Broadway productions, the most recent of which was the highly successful musical revue "Touch and Go."*

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But it does leave the young Catholic artist, and the young Catholic critic, in a maddening middle. I think it also may contribute to the loss of some souls. For the results of making this kind of moral judgments of art are two: (a) the production of pietistic, or bad art, which includes virtually all Catholic art produced under these conditions; and (b) the apostasy of some young artists who find their creative drives overwhelming, and who find that these drives do not coincide with the general recommendations made them by pietistically-minded advisers.

★

THE sad feature of these conflicts between artist and priest, artist and critic, and between the artist and himself (for which see Mauriac's *God and Mammon*) is that they are unnecessary. If the philosophic position is seen to be true, then it should be pursued, whatever the apprehensions en route. If it is true, then light is bound to break on the subject, and the conflict be resolved. What is wrong with the present state of affairs is that the philosophic position has not been pursued at all, but neglected and even hushed up. What is wrong is that the priest, in his prudence, has not even bothered to investigate the possibility that artistic norms may be enough for art, and that the unfounded and confusing use of moral norms may not be as necessary as he once thought.

St. Thomas really resolved the issue when he stated his requirements for beauty. Of these three requirements — integrity, proportion and clarity—the first sheds a great deal of light on our present problem. Integrity means wholeness. It means that nothing is present which ought not to be there, and that nothing essential is absent.

Now the moralist's fear of art arises from this very requirement for beauty. If beauty demands that the wholeness of nature be imitated, and if, for instance, sin is to be found in nature, then sin must be found in art. To eliminate sin studiously would be to destroy the integrity of the work. It would be to alter the universe as God made or permitted it, as though to improve on it. When the pietist counsels us to draw men not as they are but as they ought to be—to play down sin and play up virtue—he is asking us to alter the proportions, to omit something, to falsify the universe as it actually exists under the permitting Hand of God. He simplifies the universe, makes it over into something easier and more obvious. He urges the artist to tell lies, in effect to deny the Fall and the necessity of the Cross, to pretend that the Kingdom of God has already come, in his well-intentioned effort to improve the world. But however good his intentions, what he produces, or causes the "artist" to produce, is not true, not beautiful, and certainly not good.

To do all this he must ignore or abandon aesthetic norms. He must discard the notion of integrity for fear of the damage integrity may do. Having done away with the appropriate artistic norms, he must fill the gap with moral norms, the only norms with which he is familiar. In place of a truth which beauty requires, he substitutes an ideal of untruth, as though an untruth were less capable of doing damage.

★

HE MIGHT have spared himself the trouble, and the rest of us the confusion, if he had been content to rest on aesthetic criteria. For these criteria take care of the matter. Integrity, which is an aesthetic standard, requires that the imitation be honest. It requires that virtue and vice play the same role in art which they truly do in nature. It requires that the virtue be seen as a virtue and the vice as a vice. To interchange them, or to eliminate one or the other from the picture, would be to cause an excess or an absence in the imitation. To imply that a sinful action is virtuous, in a play or a novel, is to add to the action a quality which it does not possess. The work is immediately seen to be defective—as art, and judged on artistic grounds. There has been no irrelevant moral judgment. The requirement of integrity is not made for the purpose of protecting public morals but in order to protect the art. Lacking integrity, the art work will not be beautiful, will not achieve its own end.

To give examples, the aesthetic norm of integrity condemns simultaneously *The Voice of the Turtle* and virtually all "Catholic" fiction. It condemns them not as moral dangers, nor as moral objects, but as works of art. In *The Voice of the Turtle,* the human action of irresponsible sexual intercourse is given its due attractiveness—and it is dishonest to suppose that it is not in many ways attractive—but not its due involvements and frustrations, psychological and social, as they are to be found in nature. The play fails to mirror the wholeness of the particular act which it imitates, and is therefore lacking in beauty or in those qualities which might make it a work of art. It is defective as art, long before any left-handed moral judgment is made.

The usual "Catholic" short story or novel is defective by the same standard, though on the reverse side of the coin. When pietistic writers turn out narratives in which sin either does not exist or is depicted without its motivating attractiveness, or turn out characters meant as models for emulation rather than imitations of such people as do exist, they too lack integrity. An element present in nature is absent, in its true proportion at least, in their works. If Catholics as a whole have produced relatively little valid art in this country it is primarily for this reason.

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The above judgments have been arrived at through exclusively aesthetic, and philosophically appropriate, norms. It should be obvious that moralistic judgment is unnecessary, having been precluded by a judgment formed within the proper boundaries. It should also be noted that no matter how high the "moral" praise for the pietistic work, it remains incapable of giving the work any artistic stature whatever.

The moralist, then, may retire his own forms of judgment without fear. He is under no obligation to evaluate the work as morally objectionable or unobjectionable. He has only to ask, or let the critic ask: Is it art, or is it not art?

This distinction between an aesthetic and a moral judgment, permitting as it does the aesthetic to take care of the work of art on its own terms, may in some quarters seem mere hair-splitting, designed for the intellectual comfort of the artist but with little practical value. If the end result is the same, what matter the procedure? I think the procedure matters a great deal, and here are some of the ways in which it matters:

1. It permits the philosopher and the priest to talk the same language, and to mean the same things, which is always desirable.

2. It permits the artist to understand what is required of him, without nervous *a priori* moral injunctions which send him submissively to his work with one eye shut—or defiantly to his work, leaving the Church behind him.

3. It will produce better art by Catholics and help discourage the bad art associated with Catholicism in this country.

4. It will improve taste among the Catholic laity, providing proper standards in place of the uncritical praise now showered on whatever seems "safe" (see the reviews of Hollywood's *Joan of Arc*) and the uncritical condemnation of whatever seems "sordid" (see the Baltimore *Catholic Review's* dismissal of *All the King's Men* on the grounds that it deals with political dishonesty).

5. It is the correct procedure, and we have no business dealing in makeshifts.

The McCarthy Muddle

The Senator only confuses the cause he tries to defend.

Christopher Emmet

IF WE ARE to deal successfully with Communist actions in the cold war, a middle way must be found between the reckless smearing of honest liberals, and ignoring the dangers of Communist infiltration.

Senator McCarthy's intervention is all the more regrettable because the recent trend was toward this middle course. The government's success in gaining convictions in the various cases involving Communism, together with the formidable new evidence of successful Soviet spying, such as the Fuchs case, had convinced many liberals of the need for some government precautions.

The background of the McCarthy hearings is the bitter controversy over the State Department, which was brought to a head by the disaster in China, plus the Hiss case, plus Secretary Acheson's remarks about Hiss. Several factors favored this concentration of the Communist controversy on China. In the first place, the policy of the Far Eastern section of the State Department had been consistently soft and over-optimistic about the Chinese Communists. In addition, some of our officials and consultants associated with that section have compromising records of former Communist front affiliations. Lastly, our China policy had been exempt from bi-partisan control and consultation. So it was natural that Republicans in Congress should have tied in their opposition to State Department policies on China with their suspicions of State Department personnel.

Obviously, there was a Republican Party interest in proving such charges and a Democratic Party interest in denying them. But since the prestige of the Secretary of State and our national unity are involved, a thorough and non-partisan investigation to clear up the situation would have been definitely helpful, the more so since necessary appropriations for ECA and arms for Europe are threatened by Congressional distrust of the State Department.

It is this opportunity which has been missed by the irresponsible nature of Senator McCarthy's

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attack. The Senator is not experienced in the study of Communism. His background, as a reactionary Republican and special champion of the real estate lobby, made him peculiarly unfitted to distinguish between actual disloyalty and the former tendency of some well-meaning liberals to join Communist fronts with ostensibly noble aims, before the facts about Communist methods had been fully exposed to the American people. But McCarthy has grabbed the ball and the headlines.

The result has been to spread confusion in the anti-Communist ranks, which the Administration was quick to exploit. Senator Tydings was chosen as the hatchet man, and much of the blame for the miscarriage of the investigation rests on him. In the first two days of hearings, which were crucial from the publicity point-of-view, McCarthy was interrupted 85 times during his first 250 minutes on the stand, and was able to read his charges for only 17 minutes.

Moreover, it was on Senator Tydings' insistence that the names of Senator McCarthy's "suspects" were released to the public, so that he should share responsibility for any damage to their reputations. Altogether the investigation looks rather like an unequal contest between an enraged hick and an accomplished city slicker, with the latter, in the person of Tydings, getting the applause and the laughs.

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NEVERTHELESS Senator McCarthy must accept the main responsibility if the investigation proves abortive. It was no one's fault but his own that he made grotesquely varying claims about the number of Communists he was going to expose in the State Department. In his first speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, it was 205. A day or so later at Salt Lake City the number had risen to 207. In Reno the following day it had fallen to 57. But these, the Senator asserted, were "card-carrying Communists." Later still he told the committee that he would present a list of 81 individuals who were Communists or suspected of being Communists—a very different story.

McCarthy not only exaggerated the number of the State Department employees whom he suspects but he hopelessly confused three entirely separate categories—those whom he accused of being personally disloyal, those whom he regards as poor security risks because they joined Communist front groups, and those whom he regards as security risks for moral or other reasons.

Because of his ignorance and irresponsibility it is known that some of the most reliable experts on Communism, who share some of the Senator's misgivings about the Far Eastern personnel and policies of the State Department, have refused to supply him with valuable data because of their conviction that he would misuse it. The Senator's great disservice is not only the injustice he may have done to certain individuals, but the obstacles he has raised to a moderate and constructive approach to the whole security problem.

However, even omitting the McCarthys on the one hand and those who deny need for any loyalty checks on the other, there still remains a wide difference of opinion as to just where the line should be drawn.

In an editorial on March 10, the New York *Times* took the extreme position that it was wrong to criticize or penalize a man because of the organizations he joins—on the ground that this was establishing guilt by association. In reply Eugene Lyons wrote:

> You ignore the fact that the fellow-traveling fronts are deliberately and astutely planned, named, disguised and decorated to promote anti-American policies in the interests of and under the explicit orders of a foreign police state. Do you really contend that this central truth does not put such organizations in a special category, requiring special public vigilance and demanding special criteria of judgment?
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> The issue is not 'the right to join'. Nobody denies that right. The issue is the right of a democratic society to expose and identify the origin and objective of camouflaged organizations—and the obligation of the joiner to accept the moral consequences of joining, in terms of public opinion.

It must be remembered that many of the Communist front groups, which innocent liberals are criticized for joining, not only were formed to promote Communist Party interests in this country but directly or indirectly served to promote and defend Soviet foreign policy. Such groups were partly responsible for misleading the American people about Soviet policy and so helped to bring about the present dangerous pass. Every innocent liberal who lent his name became co-responsible for the lies told and the policies advocated. In fact such liberal "joiners" and fellow-travelers were far more influential in inducing the appeasement of Russia than the Communists themselves.

Even in the 1930's all the Communist front groups, however innocent they appeared, included at least a few *known* Communists or dyed-in-the-wool pro-Communists. Hence, by openly associating with the known pro-Communist members of these committees, the liberals who joined implied their endorsement of the integrity and patriotism of these people. Thus these liberal members unwittingly lent their own respectability and influence not only to the pro-Communist activities carried on by front committees, but thereby furthered *all* pro-Communist activities.

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CLEARLY it is wrong to accuse such liberals of ever having been disloyal themselves, merely on this evidence, but should they be immune from criticism for the actions of the groups or the men whom they supported? Isn't it fair to say that so serious an error of judgment reflects on their common sense and political insight, even if they have now changed their minds? Isn't it equally fair to say that in some cases this not only indicates that they are poor political guides but that they are poor security risks? This is the real question at stake today in the Senate hearings, however Senator McCarthy has succeeded in confusing it.

In judging this question we must take each case on its merits, not confuse widely differing types of charges after the fashion of Senator McCarthy. Moreover, as Judge Dorothy Kenyon said in answer to the Senator, we must judge the individual on his *whole* record, not just on his or her mistakes in joining committees. The government loyalty boards do this. Senator McCarthy does not. And as part of that whole picture we must also consider how many such committees they actually became members of, the *time* when they joined and the mood of the country at the time.

Another test is whether the liberal in question persisted in joining or remaining in a front committee, after being told about Communist control of the group. Such a militant democrat as Dr. L. M. Birkhead, who was roped into a few of these groups, made it a practice publicly to resign and release his resignation to the press, which was the only way to compensate for the fact that his name had previously been misused. Morris Ernst and Mrs. Roosevelt did this on occasion.

An alternative to such public resignation was to remain in the group and openly fight against Communist control, until it was clear that the fight was hopeless. This was the course followed by Max Yergen in his legal struggle with Paul Robeson for control of the Council on African Affairs, and it was rightly commended by the *Times* in connection with Eugene Lyons' letter. It was also followed with success in the case of some CIO labor unions.

But the key question is whether the liberal who formerly joined Communist fronts has given any indication that he really regrets his mistake, and that he now fully understands the facts of life not only about Soviet policy, but about Communist front groups. It is not fair to ask the public to forgive and forget past mistakes until they have been frankly acknowledged. Many former liberal sponsors of front groups simply stopped joining when it ceased to be fashionable, but they have never taken any positive action either to confess their fault or to make up for it.

Surely no one can deny that the *degree* of awareness of the Communist danger is important in all policy-making positions, as long as the U. S. is involved in a cold war with Soviet Russia, just as discretion is important in all sensitive positions involving security. In the present desperate struggle to preserve what is left of the world's freedom, much of which we needlessly sacrificed, it is not enough to be non-Communist. For the leaders in the fight must give priority to the cause of liberation as well as that of containment.

The Labor Movement

Harold Laski's Death

THE death of Harold Laski reminds men of my age that we have been carrying his writings on both shoulders. And we have not been able to make a success of it. Mr. Laski did not make a success of it either. Nor did the British Labor Party, one of whose many intellectual midwives he was. He who was a source of strength to them became a standing embarrassment.

There was a good deal of evidence for respecting Mr. Laski, and part of it furnished the basis for his becoming Chairman of the British Labor Party. That was remembered by Mr. Attlee when Harold Laski died recently. What the Prime Minister said was the mere truth: that Laski was "a man of outstanding gifts, who had done great work for the Labor and Socialist movement."

But he had, in his latter years, done them much harm. Or he would have done them much harm if men had continued to take him seriously. The fact of the matter was that, with respect to the labor and socialist movements, Laski had served his purposes, and had outlived his intellectual usefulness. And it was great kindness and an abiding sense of loyalty, a devotion whose sources were memorial, which prevented the British Labor Party from making Laski a kind of pensioner.

But the burden must have been heavy. And sharp, at times, must have been the temptation to repeat the words of Cromwell, which Mr. Amery used in the House of Commons to Neville Chamberlain: "You have sat here too long for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go."

For Harold Laski had, as the French say, the defects of his qualities. And the defects grew and were nur-

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In the temporary absence of John Cort, FRANCIS DOWNING *begins in this issue the first of a series of articles on the Labor Movement. Now on the faculty of Queens College, Mr. Downing was at one time the Educational Director of the* CIO-UAW *program in the northeastern states.*

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tured, until it was easy to believe that they alone existed, and that there had never been anything else. So that the dogmas hardened, and the doctrines became dogma, and the lecturer began publicly to turn into a scold. The beliefs and positions of Laski became sacred, took on the character of religion, indeed, of which he was the prophet and the high priest. The waspishness became less disciplined and contained, and the need for adulation greater as the reason for giving it grew less.

Sometime ago friends remarked to Mr. Laski that the British economist and editor, Kingsley Martin, was likely to advocate whatever had been told to him by his latest luncheon companion. And Laski agreed but said that the worst of it was Martin had taken to lunching alone. That, of course, may or not be a remark you find to your liking. In any case, it is pertinent to say that these habits of speech crept into his public speeches, and to debate with him was to risk the peril of personal attack.

Laski was, of course, a Marxist, and it was Marxism he expected to advance in the Labor Party. No doubt there is some hatred based on class, based on memory of the past, in some of the leaders of the British Labor Party. It is as difficult, for example, for Aneurin Bevan to forget the squalor of his youth as it was for Dickens to have forgotten his. But on the whole the Labor Party has not been a prisoner of Marxist doctrine.

Marx, as Bertrand Russell puts it, "sanctified the hatred and the strife." Russell finds that "the present Soviet system is an externalization of Marx's liverish misanthropy." But the present British system, it is clear to me, is not. And since Laski was unwilling to alter his Marxist convictions, to alter the Marxist conception of that abstraction called the State and, in the last years, with the Labor Party having the responsibility of power, Laski was not of much help to them.

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NOR was he of much help to the Foreign Office or to Mr. Ernest Bevin whose task in respect of Russia was, at least, as difficult as our own.

Laski's position on Soviet Russia was indeed curious, and it gave comfort to those alleged English-speaking liberals who were unable to formulate the rationalization, or to write the language for themselves. Laski became the devil's advocate and there is no evidence that he found the advocacy difficult. Perhaps that was because he moved in a completely Marxist structure, but that he mired the mind and the work of the unhappy Liberal who followed him is clear. The idea that there was democracy in Soviet Russia, something called "economic democracy," was probably the invention of the Webbs, but the idea was furnished an impressive vocabulary by Harold Laski. Europe, I think, has had no more brilliant example than Mr. Laski gave it, of *la trahison des clercs*.

Now this is all the more curious and disappointing because Laski has set down his opposition to Communism in England—or more properly in the British Trade Unions. Laski, in fact, was the man who set forth, brilliantly as always and with eloquence, the reasons why Communists should be expelled from the trade unions in England.

What makes this, as Lewis Carroll's Alice used to say, curiouser and curiouser is that Laski took exactly the opposite position in respect of our own Communists.

Laski was invited, for God knows what strange reason, to give the first of the Sidney Hillman Lectures in the United States in 1949. The lectures are the basis of the latest book he published—*Trade Unions in the New Society*. There he registers unhappiness at the thought that Communists have no place in our own unions. Indeed, he finds they have a positive role to play, and should be allowed to play it. The reason for this is that they offer stimulation and challenge to traditional thought and behavior.

In the Soviet system "labor unions are a department of government: a disaffected worker can be sent to a labor camp or deprived of his ration card; the genuine proletarian is more powerless than he was in England in the worst days of the Industrial Revolution. The English treatment of agricultural laborers, as set forth in the Hammonds' 'Village Laborer,' was appalling, but it was not in the same world with the death and deportation of millions of peasants deliberately brought about by Stalin." These words are those of Bertrand Russell, (*Saturday Review of Literature,* March 25, 1950) but Mr. Laski, far from joining in them, saw nothing worthy of his condemnation in the trade union and labor arrangements by Stalin.

Mr. Laski could hold independently in his mind and separately defend each of these three positions: there were no unions in Russia as we know them, because they did not need them, as we do. Communists in English trade unions were bad; but in American trade unions they were good.

Laski could, and did, advocate in England what he called "revolution by consent," and he approved it when it came. Laski could condemn, and did, absolutism in ideas and in institutions in the western world. But absolutism in the East had a history and we must know that history, and bring to it the sympathy of comprehension. Hence he was a proponent of something he called "Anglo-Russian Solidarity." Like many Liberals he failed in the ubiquitous presence of the great moral crisis of our times, because he was willing to let his coruscating mind defend a double standard of morality.

He has not helped the cause of the non-communist left, and he gave to conservatives a weapon and an object of attack they do not deserve. And that, I think, is his unhappiest heritage.

Yet the British Labor Party gave him place without power. They pursued their ends in spite of him. In his novel, *The Crack in the Column,* George Weller says of some visiting British Trade Unionists that they were "men who got their politics by mistrusting Harold Laski in detail and agreeing with him in general." It is a remark, I think, which in describing both, contains a good deal of truth. FRANCIS DOWNING.

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The Stage

The Consul

THE phenomenon of Gian-Carlo Menotti seems to be troubling a good many of the critics round the town. Almost all of the music men have issued statements more or less conceding to the drama people, and the drama people have been saluting in return. Actually, several of the latter do not appear to have attended at all. Mr. Menotti calls his present work a "musical drama"—a statement which is historically confusing but, I think, fairly justified in this case. Indeed, I think it would be entirely justified if its author had not tried somewhat harder for *melodrama* rather than drama; if he had not been so determined to deliver a show as well as a play. (It is important to note here that the term "author" in the strict sense is the only possible one for Mr. Menotti since he writes his own play, composes its music, stages its entire production. In short, he is to blame for everything: a responsible man.)

In his present big hit at the Barrymore, his fable is familiar. At a Consulate in a Police State, somewhere in Europe, we are confronted with six people in addition to the Consul's Secretary, a model of female bureaucracy. All of these people are desperate for visas but we are most concerned with the fate of one young woman, whose husband we have learned is a leader in the resistance movement. We have seen this man wounded by the secret police; we have watched his temporary escape; and in subsequent scenes we watch the consul's refusal of his wife, the destruction of his home, his child, his mother, and anticlimactically, of himself and his wife.

So much for bare story. As I have said, it's a familiar one. It has been written by Koestler, Sartre, in fact by most of the "uncurtained" writers. It has been movied, radioed, documented in a thousand journals. In Mr. Menotti's hands, however, this trite and terrible and true fable develops a very special theatre graph. For almost two entire acts, and in spite of his predilection for claptrap and tricks, he does manage, I think, to impose art on his material. Granted that behind his every door there is A Policeman, that his every floor creak spells death, that his secret signal has *got* to be (crash!) the rock through the window pane, it is still necessary to add that these effects are not only effects in our age, they are also facts. And here they are supported by grand simplicities. The Old Grandmother of the play sings and acts a lullaby which is simply that, and as such, the most moving and poignant performances I have watched on the postwar stage. Again, among the petitioners at the Consulate, there is presented a naive Magician who, although he can produce marvels and even whole moments of oblivion for his fellowmen, cannot produce a visa.

Finally, at the climactic moment, when the anguished heroine sings of her despair of life and still must witness the Police Chief emerging from behind the Consul's door, I do imagine every member of the giant cheering audience to have felt that the cry of Europe had been renewed. It was at the end of this aria, closing the second act, that a very old and unfamiliar and catankerous lady sitting behind me shook my shoulder and shouted, "I have seen this in Lisbon."

But beyond this there is nothing, or better, a damn sight too much. There are misplaced telephones, shadows and chains; there are flickering lights; there is a dumb show of a bleeding baby and a vision of Death as the hero's little sister, who is eating fruit and dressed as the Secretary. Worst of all, there is no third act at all, but only a long Freudian mess with the dead Grandmother done up in wedding-satin and acting the bride of her son, while the remainder of the protagonists are made to ape Hieronymus Bosch and the scenery dances a dance. At this point, it appears, one might as well commemorate the graves of Buchenwald by a concert of Liszt.

I wish I knew what recommendation to make to Mr. Menotti that he might become serious as well as prodigious. Perhaps he ought to advance towards "Aunt Sally's Dream Book" rather constantly edging around Mr. Freud's. Perhaps he ought only to memorize the "Songs of Innocence." In one-half of his present work he seems to have understood that the modern hallucination is surely not of death—that is the reality—but of joy, of life. Certainly it is only in this half of the work that his compassion tells as well as his talents. And I do think it would be wise for him to consider that it is again only in this half of the work that his wonderful, wonderful cast—I saw Powers, Bryner, Lane, Jongeyans, Andreassi—can any way prove him to be not only a showman but also a musical dramatist. (*at the Barrymore*)

KAPPO PHELAN.

The Screen

Rough Stuff in Several Languages

COMPARISONS are not always fair, but there are enough points of similarity between *"Captain Carey, U.S.A.,"* in which Alan Ladd plays a former oss man who returns to Italy, and *"The Walls of Malapaga,"* in which Jean Gabin plays a French criminal hiding in Genoa, to make us consider the differences. "Carey," produced in Hollywood by Richard Maibaum, has quite authentic reproductions of Italian settings; but in spite of its skilful designs, this film has a clean slickness which makes it seem unreal in comparison with "The Walls," an Italian movie that was photographed on the spot in Genoa, with its crowded streets, busy wharves, bombed buildings. Actually the differences between the two pictures extend much farther than their success in conveying the feeling of place. Both of the leading male characters, as virile as they come, are portraying disillusioned cynics, but Ladd, hampered somewhat by his hand-

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some though dead pan, must rely more on fisticuffs and dialogue to put over his discontent with the world, with Italians in general and with one Italian woman (Wanda Hendrix) in particular, a woman with whom he was in love but who acts suspiciously like the betrayer who revealed the OSS hideaway. Gabin, on the other hand, being a good actor, knows how to convey suffering without too much talk about it; and whether his pain is physical or mental (it's both in "The Walls") he makes us feel with him.

Actually "Captain Carey, U.S.A." is little more than a rough and tumble, post-war adventure film. Alan gets pushed around quite a bit, but he finally wipes off the blood and things are not as bad as they seem. In "The Walls of Malapaga," things are as bad as they seem, and when Gabin, who is being pursued by the police for killing a woman in France, falls in love with an Italian waitress, he comes to know happiness but his story does not end in a golden glow with love conquering all. This woman, portrayed with beauty and understanding by Isa Miranda, is running away from her vicious husband and is greatly concerned over her adolescent daughter, who is both protective and jealous of Gabin. Under the production of Alfredo Guarini and the direction of Rene Clement, this unsual story becomes very moving as a slice of life about people who do not win our approval; but they are real people and worthy of our understanding. Vera Talchi as the girl who is neither child nor adult will probably break your heart, and when the film ends, in the only way it could end, you hope against hope that she will be spared from more suffering.

We have several other films this week that show the dilemmas into which a man can get himself. *"Side Street"* (not to be confused with the Nathaniel Benchley novel of the same name) sheds quite a few tears over an unhappy postman (Farley Granger) who steals some money and then sinks beyond his depth when the theft turns out to be not small but big stuff. The chase, by the police and the criminals from whom he made the theft, and the on-the-spot New York scenes are extremely well done, but the social content gets pretty phoney. The cast, which also includes Paul Kelly, James Craig and Cathy O'Donnell tries hard enough, but the whole picture is too brutal and depressing; and the speech at the end declaring this poor poor boy "no hero, no criminal" is straight nonsense. We all know that every criminal has a story and there may be extenuating circumstances, but let's not whitewash too many of our cinematic bad boys.

"Outside the Wall" shows what a difficult time an ex-convict can have in adjusting himself. After 15 years of prison, Richard Basehart really means to go straight, but life is full of problems most of which he doesn't understand. He works in a sanitarium, falls for a blond nurse (Marilyn Maxwell) who wants more than her share of luxuries, and in no time poor Richard falls in with bad company and comes dangerously close to heading back to prison. The moral about accepting responsibilities in life is well put over; however the melodramatic trimmings have to be taken with several grains of salt.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

Of Note

Artists and Saints

ETIENNE GILSON writes on art and sanctity in the first issue of a new critical quarterly, *Measure* (Henry Regnery Company, 20 West Jackson Blvd., Chicago 4.) This is an excerpt:

> Art is literally priceless. Wholly unreal, it puts to shame what is but reality.
>
> Unless we realize this, we shall never understand what so many writers meant when they said that their lives were, in a way, as many attempts at holiness. At first sight, this seems a rather unfortunate simile. We have read so much about "La Vie de Boheme," wild life in Montmartre and Greenwich Village, that loose living seems to us inseparable from art. It is, up to a point. To break away from "la vie bourgeoise" and its hateful conventionalism is pretty much, for a young artist, what it is for a religious soul to renounce the world and to enter clerical life. In late antiquity, philosophers could be at once recognized by their garb. Still today men of God do not dress like other men, because they are not like other men, but the broad brimmed hats and the floating scarves of some old artists or even the childish disguise of some young "rapins" are not wholly unlike the external marks of genuine clerical life. Supposing it meant nothing more, this would at least signify their desire not to belong in the crowd of those who do not live by art.
>
> Such caricatures of priesthood should neither be overlooked, for they have their significance, nor be taken too seriously. But things become different when we have to consider a life *wholly* dedicated to art. This time, the "wholly" should be taken with the fulness of its meaning. Just like the young man in the Gospel who has left everything in order to follow Christ, or like the young Francis of Assisi giving up everything the better to imitate Him, the man we now have in mind is ready to sacrifice to art not only what he has and what he is, but even all those whom he loves. If he actually serves art as he might otherwise serve God, is he not a saint?
>
> When they ask themselves the question, artists usually give the correct answer. They clearly realize the radical difference which separates the highest artistic life from true holiness, and it is that while the whole effort of the holy man is to turn himself into a saint, that of the artist is wholly spent in the making of his works. If he is an artist, the saint is to himself his own masterpiece. In other words, whereas the fruit of art is in what the

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artist makes, the fruit of holiness is in what the saint himself is. After bequeathing to posterity a priceless treasure of irreplaceable masterpieces, the artist may die a spiritual destitute. Not only is he nothing, but having completely put himself in each one of his successive works, he has never been anybody. The saint, not the artist, is well founded in repeating with dying Nero: *Qualis artifex pereo!* The greatness of art should not blind us to its misery, which is to sacrifice the man to his works.

"A Dying Parish"

THE work of the Rev. Andrew Lawrence, M.S.SS.T. in rural Mississippi has been cited in a Vatican account of the Church's apostolate among American Negroes. Issued by the Fides Documentation Service, Rome, an agency of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the statement has been published as a pamphlet by the Brooklyn Interracial Council (191 Joralemon St., Brooklyn 2, New York.)

The mission workers among the Negroes of the United States—priests and nuns—have long since learned that purely spiritual work for the colored is hampered and frustrated unless it is accompanied by a broad social welfare program; recreational and youth projects, cooperatives and credit unions, parent-teachers' associations, employment agencies, etc. Such activities testify to the remarkable spirit of cooperation and self-help which intelligent guidance can readily develop. . . .

In 1943 this young priest came to what was called "a dying parish" and started work among both whites and blacks, amid the utter poverty of rural tenants and agricultural laborers. Today eleven buildings stand in what was formerly a barren field. They form Sacred Heart Village near Camden, Mississippi. They are Sacred Heart Grammar and High School, church, convent, rectory, clinic, barn, agricultural implement building, home economics building, garage and machine shop, veterans' building and model home. They are all the product of volunteer labor on the part of the priests and Negroes. They typify the Church's answer to the missionary problem. They are but the beginning of a program to train the underprivileged people for a new and secure life—life on the land. The people are trained to assume the responsibility of ownership. As they give evidence of ability to assume more responsibilities, their holdings are increased and they become a free, self-sustaining people with a sense of pride in their achievements. Students who show special ability are encouraged to go on for college or university work and are offered scholarships if they will sign a written agreement that they will come back to their home and work among their own people for a period of at least five years. Demonstration crops and a reforestation project are part of the plan.

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Epic of Fear

Pierre Emmanuel

IN OUR day the writer is a less creative artist than an intellectual who writes. Reality has become a problem which the novelist and the playwright try to solve through the characters they invent, and their stories have become demonstrations of their theories. In other words, art is being replaced by the document, real or imagined. This abstraction is dangerous for literature because a documentary, no matter how photographically true to life, never carries as much conviction as a work of fiction whose characters remain free, often against the author's will. All of Sartre's characters, for example, try to prove their existence before they live—in fact, they would rather prove themselves than live. They symbolize the anguish of our time, without suffering it in their own flesh.

Some of us saw or read Sartre's *Red Gloves*. It seemed like a perfect theorem, proceeding from proposition to conclusion without a logical flaw. And we concluded, like the author, that in a given situation certain courses of action are possible. But the author's evidence did not dispel our doubts, perhaps because in our hearts we challenged it. We wanted to free ourselves from the strict mathematical logic of the story; we want to face the problem in our own way, not according to the pattern established by so many witnesses, from Koestler to Kravchenko. But this is impossible unless art integrates reality, then goes beyond it.

This is what Georges Bernanos succeeded in doing in his last book, *Dialogues des Carmélites* (Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1949), the story of the Carmelite nuns of Compiègne who were guillotined during the French Revolution. Theirs is an old story, yet it is closer to us than France's 1940 defeat as seen by Sartre. I read it at one sitting, and for the first time in years felt the thrill of awe, the instinctive urge to pay tribute that a masterpiece awakens.

The beauty of this book, which makes Claudel's plays seem pale, is simple. Here the drama of fear—the essential drama of our time—is analyzed and mastered with inexorable logic: not with the pseudo-logic of modern naturalism but with the eternal accuracy of art. Bernanos does not describe appearances; he re-creates the feelings and actions of people who suffer in their individual ways the fatality of a history from which they must free themselves. For him the story, no matter how fearful, is a false prison; it cannot fetter the freedom through which man wins salvation. And he tells it, makes it real for us in language that goes far beyond our own story. The truth of a work of art does not lie in banal language; it lies in the *common* universal language that all men understand because its beauty touches them in regions that ordinary language cannot reach.

Dialogues des Carmélites was written as the scenario for a film. It could be—and soon will be—a classic French tragedy. Here is its outline: a decree of the French Revolutionary Convention orders the Compiègne Carmelites to disband. In the absence of the Prioress, a woman of deep piety and peasant wisdom, the nuns unanimously vow to die as martyrs. When the Prioress returns, she accepts the vow assumed by the group. The nuns are arrested, and die singing the "Salve" and the "Veni Creator." This might be a fresco from the Lives of the Saints. It becomes a drama because of the presence among the novices of Blanche de la Force, a young aristocrat whose whole life has been dominated by fear and who sought refuge from the terrors of the world in the convent. Now in the cloister itself fear takes possession of her. It is a fear stronger and more sharply defined than any she has ever known. Cornered, compelled to face reality, she takes the martyr's vow with her companions. But no sooner has she spoken the words than she understands their real meaning, and flees. No human appeal can bring her back, for she has sunk into a disgrace more tenacious than fear itself. Yet on the day of the execution, as the "Veni Creator" ends on the last nun's lips, it rises again from the crowd, and Blanche in her turn comes forward to die.

★

LET us not be deceived by Bernanos' subject: his drama is of our time, written for our time. We live in the age of fear; not only the fear of bombs, but a more insidious, more abject fear which has been called the fear of fear. Many are afraid to say what they believe lest they stand accused in tomorrow's courts. They are afraid that history will apparently invalidate the truth they would defend. Others are more subtly afraid: they feel themselves incapable of maintaining their position to the point of sacrifice, and they fear they may deny themselves. Everywhere this fear is being exploited and is misnamed prudence—which is blasphemy because prudence is the courage of the strong. We no longer live in the present, but in the future; or, more precisely, we are haunted by fear of the future. We let ourselves be paralyzed by fear of what may come, what has not yet come. It is a terror all the more compelling because it is imaginary.

Bernanos' drama deals with this fear, an entirely personal one which might be expressed in these terms: Am I sure I am worthy of what I believe? Absolutely not. Would it not be better, then, to believe and keep silent?

Some characters in the story, like Constance, the young novice who is Blanche's friend, are so strong in their certainty that they seem unconscious of it and are utterly unconcerned. Every moment of Constance's life is happy because she knows that not she, but God, will provide for the next moment. Some characters weigh

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PIERRE EMMANUEL *is a French poet who has been associated with the magazine Esprit. He has for a number of years been director of the British section of the French National Broadcasting System. This article was translated by Sylvia Glass.*

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Annual Education Issue

The April 14 issue of The Commonweal will include among its features:

MARK HOPKINS, THE LOG AND THE DOLLAR,

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THE VESTIGE OF GOD,

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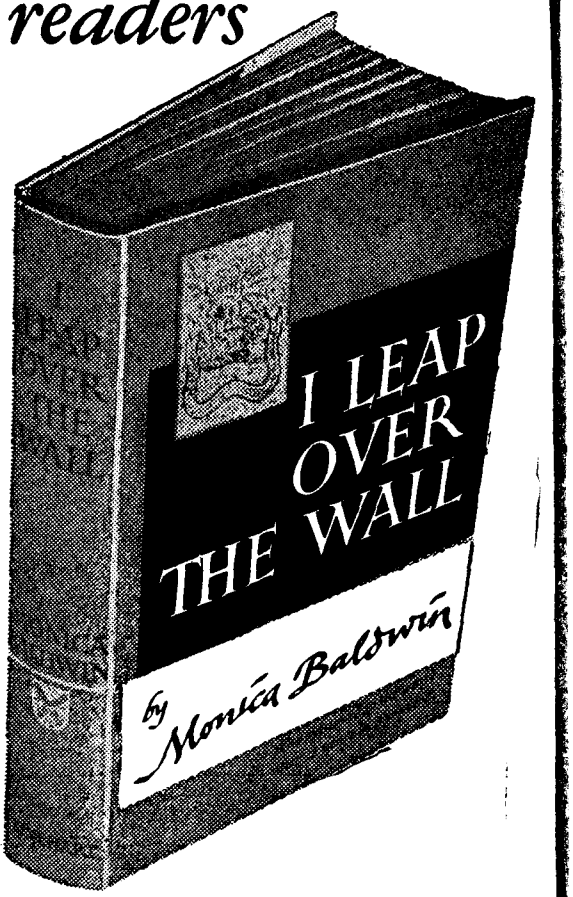

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the for and the against, know they are fallible, and leave it to God to judge them and test them when the time comes. These are experienced women who are not afraid to die but nevertheless think about death. Finally there is Blanche, whose disgust at her own cowardice drives her to that finality of purpose where moral courage is identified with fear. Constance, not Blanche, casts the only vote against taking the martyr's vow. Yet Blanche denies herself and must sink into the depths of abasement to save herself.

It is not for man to judge the cowardice or courage of his fellows. In the moment of final decision—the only one that counts—our freedom is in God's hands. Is Blanche heroic in joining her sisters in death? This is not the important question, for the man or woman who bears witness is overshadowed by the testimony he gives. Some martyrs have suffered and died with hearts crushed by fear. When Blanche climbed the steps of the scaffold she did not leave behind her the fear that had gripped her since childhood; despite her recourse to God she could not overcome it. But God sanctified this fear, accepted it as the most naked expression of human weakness, the most precious of gifts—for the sacrifice of one who is afraid is the ultimate human sacrifice, the offering of hopelessness to hope.

That is the theme of *Dialogues des Carmélites*. It should be read as a Greek tragedy is read, with the feeling that its story is reenacted in our own hearts every day. Bernanos has written the epic of fear for all time, and it is also an epic of freedom. Blanche de la Force ascends the scaffold not because she is moved by the example of others, but because she is free in the midst of her fear to take responsibility for it, and by so doing to master it, even though suffering it until the end.

Books

Meat and Man. A Study of Monopoly, Unionism, and Food Policy. Lewis Corey. Viking. $4.50.

WHAT makes this book interesting and important is not alone its quality, which is excellent, but the fact that the organized meat workers should have wanted such a book written, and that they should have asked Lewis Corey to write it.

I can think of no organization of manufacturers, no foundation, that would have had that much good sense and courage. But now that the butchers have set the precedent I can think of at least a dozen other unions that could use to advantage similarly uninhibited and creative in-context studies of their affairs—assuming they can find people capable of writing them.

"I know of no book," writes Corey in his preface, "which covers an industry in all its interrelated aspects: economics, management, and unionism within the larger framework of their social performance, significance, and problems."

After all, somebody, sometime has to think of whole problems rather than their compartmentalized fragments and since obviously neither government nor industry is disposed to do this, it might as well be the union. Statesmanship is where you find it. Corey's book, one hopes, is a portent of the kind of statesmanship that American trade unionism will increasingly manifest.

THE book ranges all the way from the social muck raked by Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* to current frontiers of biochemical research directed at synthesizing the annual protein factor; from the ardors and miseries of nineteenth century trade unionism to FAO's World Targets for 1960, from the spreading grass agriculture of the South to the tsetse fly and the phosphate cartel as they affect the food potentials of Africa and the Pacific Basin. All this is strictly germane to Corey's inquiry, and for that matter, strictly germane to the business of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen, AFL, which has a vested interest in trying to understand the position it occupies in our vastly and unpleasantly complicated one world.

The nub of Corey's analysis and recommendation is this: "Nowhere in all the philosophy and practices of regulation is there a glimmer of objectives and values other than those of competition. Competition is important. But it is impossible (as experience shows) to restore competition within the monopoly areas. And even if it could be restored, competition that is limited to price and profit will not necessarily benefit the food industries.

"What is needed . . . is to give the production and distribution of food a public utility character. . . . I suggest that the key areas in the food industries (in this case meat packing) be given a public utility character, with monopoly corporations converted into public corporations on the model of TVA. The independent concerns should be allowed to operate under free, private or cooperative enterprise. . . . The proposed set-up for the meat industry might become a pattern for all food industries. . . . Monopoly corporations in farm implement and fertilizer industries also should be converted into public corporations."

Whether this would work or not will never be known, of course, until it is tried. Corey has no trouble in showing, however, that what we have does not work, either in the meat industry or in the food industry generally.

What we have today—speaking of the food industries as a whole—is a kind of yeasty economic and technological chaos in which the following elements may be identified, more or less at random:

Imperfect but prevailing monopoly control of prices largely through trade association activity.

Limitation and perversion of legislative authority by food lobbies with harassment and coercion of government regulatory agencies by threatening their appropriations.

Quasi-monopoly control and "rationalization" of sci-

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entific research in the food field, accomplished largely through food-industry-supported foundations like the Nutrition Foundation, the Sugar Research Foundation, and the Meat Institute.

Infiltration and domination by food monopolies of government and quasi-governmental scientific advisory agencies; for example, the committees of the National Research Council.

Uneconomic and malnutritional distortion of food consumption patterns by the "educational" activities of monopoly-controlled agencies; for example, the "eat more meat" campaigns of the Meat Institute.

The creation, extension and defense of food addictions, both positively, as through the mass advertising of the sugar products industries, and negatively, as through the de facto censorship of our advertising-subsidized press and radio.

Inter-industry competition, involving elements both inside and outside the food industry: as examples, take the struggle some years back between the canning and quick frozen food industries, which was settled more or less when the canners "joined" the new industry; the still unsettled struggle between butter and margarine; the struggle between the farmers and the pharmaceutical manufacturers over whether our vitamin-and-mineral-deficient white bread should be enriched with synthetics, or natural food ingredients like milk solids, soy flour, yeast, etc.; the struggle between the cigarette and candy addictions precipitated by the "reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet" advertising campaign of some years back.

What the journalistic explorer of this chaos notes is that it yearns always toward the dancing stars of order and security; perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the food industries and their organized employees so yearn. Monopoly price controls and union contracts are both motivated by this yearning. But obviously neither is sufficient to stabilize a situation that requires the most comprehensive planning, extending all the way from soil conservation to the direction and application of scientific research, with detailed provisions for policy-making in the interests of society as a whole. Can that sort of planning be accomplished within the framework of a mixed economy, without impairment of our political democracy? Corey thinks so and offers intelligent, if partial and elementary suggestions about how to go about it. That's a good deal—in fact it is a great deal more than has as yet been offered, to the best of my knowledge, by any other economist writing in the field.

JAMES RORTY.

The Easter Fleet. Roger Vercel. Random House, $2.75. The Short Cut. Ennio Flaiano. Pellegrini & Cudahy. $3.00.

THESE TWO novels, hailing both from Latin countries, are about the same subject, although they could not be more different in every possible way.

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French by Katherine Woods: *The Short Cut* has been no less admirably rendered from the Italian by Stuart Hood. *The Easter Fleet* is M. Vercel's fourth published book; *The Short Cut* is Signor Flaiano's first novel. Geographically they are a continent apart: *The Easter Fleet* is about the Brittany coast; *The Short Cut* is set in the Ethiopian hinterland of North Africa.

Yet both books are studies of crime and punishment, or more specifically, of crime, judgment and punishment. *The Easter Fleet* is brilliantly flood-lit, explicit; *The Short Cut* is criss-crossed with refracted lights.

Yande, the central character of *The Easter Fleet,* first appears gaunt, grey-eyed, fierce, prophesying that, as the fishermen snapped their fingers at God by sailing out on Easter Sunday, so God will snap His at them. The anxious women, watching the fishing boats sail on the soft April day, wear the faces that belong to storms. For that morning's tide, the last allotted for dredging oysters, had tempted all the men out, and the priest had been unable to persuade the Marine Administrator to forbid the sailing. Yande Goulec, hard and dour, with her love for her old father, for her good-for-nothing, drunken husband, her weak son, and her pretty, sensual daughter, learns the hard way that "your ways are not My ways." The fishing fleet comes home with the heaviest catch in its history. Yande's father has a stroke and dies, and she initiates a one-woman strike, mutiny and sulk against God, refusing to go to Mass, even to her father's funeral. She chivvies her husband into going out fishing on Corpus Christi, when the rest of the village is making the procession, she antagonizes her relatives by squabbling over her father's will, and she always loses.

Her daughter, whom she has locked up and beaten for her meetings with a young man, goes off to live in sin in Paris; her son leaves her because she has tried to bully him to sea, and into marriage; her husband she literally drives out into a storm. In the storm he finds himself again in the face of elemental challenge, brings his crew safe home, but perishes. Yet, the storm over, Yande has learned some part of her lesson. When her son offers to come and live with her, she thanks him, but lets him go; "I have my dead" are her and the book's last words.

M. Vercel is a noonday-sun writer: the piety and the blasphemy, and the intense physical vitality of the characters, their lust and hunger and pity and fear, are all clear. He is an effective writer, and a superb story-teller, and his performance is hard and brilliant.

SIGNOR FLAIANO is wholly implicit, and esoteric. He draws all in elaborate perspective. His first-person hero, given sick-leave to seek a dentist, is "engaged" in the Kierkegaardian sense, from the moment his truck overturns on his way to the coast. The natives, though tamed, are sullen; Africa, as a whole, is pullulating, hostile; the hero rapes a native woman whom he finds bathing in a stream, when he takes a short cut in the jungle. In the night, he is disturbed by a wild animal. Shooting it, the bullet ricochets and wounds the girl asleep beside him; he kills her, and later buries her, in mingled pity and fear.

Through the rest of the novel he makes his progress through the consequeces of his actions, and every step is significant; nothing is chance. Johannes, the girl's father; Elias, her brother, the major, the doctor, Mariam—all are instruments of the Avenger. The climax, that nothing will happen to the hero, that he will not even be court-martialed, for "our neighbors are too busy with their own crimes to worry about ours" is almost more than he can face. "People have no right to be so generous" he cries. "Take it or leave it," says the second lieutenant. So the hero, having come full circle, becomes aware that this valley of his sin is also the valley of his judgment.

He hears the trumpeter playing the "fall in." "The trumpet repeated the call in haste. It seemed as if he were repeating it for us—the others must already be in their places. There was not the least noise to be heard. 'It is a pretty comical trumpet for my Judgment,' I said, 'but every man has his own.'"

Understatement could hardly go further, yet, throughout, the novel has tremendous pace, the "majestic urgency" of the Hound of Heaven, relentlessly pursuing His quarry.

Both these really serious novels suggest that in Europe the winter of existentialism is ending, and that the drought of the long secularist March may in some foreseeable April be broken by sweet showers.

ANNE FREMANTLE.

The Catholic Church in the United States. Theodore Roemer, O.F.M.Cap. Herder. $5.00.

THERE have been several occasions when I have returned a book sent me for review because I felt the author would believe that any adverse criticism was actuated by personal animosity. Father Roemer's book would have gone back in the same way, except that as I am the author of the only other work along similar lines still in print, I could not refuse to give my opinion of it. It shall be as objective as possible.

Father Roemer refers to my *Story of American Catholicism* on his first page, never to mention it again, or any of my other books on American Catholic history, either in his bibliography or his many bibliographical footnotes. He says I am "readable but not always accurate" and that therefore I could hardly expect my book to be taken as the basis of his text-book. To this I merely answer that no two books could have a more different line of approach. Father Roemer could not conceivably have written my book, nor could I possibly have written his, or (if I may say so without asperity) would I ever have wanted to do so.

Let me amplify this at once: his is a good book, in some ways a very good book, but it is rather a work of reference than of what I understand as history. It is dry and statistical, without a single sparkle of wit or flash of color or human warmth. Bare facts are recorded and as all the facts appear with the same lack of emphasis, and there is no attempt at dramatic effect

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Footnotes...

CATHOLIC PRESS. In February The Commonweal published two articles on the Catholic Press by Donald McDonald and Donald Attwater which elicited a volume of mail for our Communications section. The March issue of ***The Catholic Journalist***, official organ of the Catholic Press Association, announced that the two articles will be re-printed in its April issue "so they may be fresh in mind for (the annual CPA) convention discussion."

OSSERVATORE ROMANO. The February 5 issue of the semi-official Vatican newspaper, in a thousand-word article, commented on The Commonweal's silver jubilee and recapitulated the articles in the special anniversary issue.

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or the delineation of character, the tone is monotonous.

Yet I repeat the book has real value, or may have in the hands of a teacher gifted enough to put some flesh and blood upon the grisly skeleton Father Roemer provides. It is intended primarily for seminarians, telling them the dates when all the religious congregations came to, or were founded in, the United States, and giving them similarly the dates of the establishment of every diocese and listing in an appendix the names of all the bishops who occupied them. I foresee that I shall myself be consulting it for statistical information not easily obtainable elsewhere.

The plan of the book is excellent, and gets better as the book goes on. It is now and then a little arbitrary, perhaps, but that could hardly be otherwise. Part IV is entitled "The Period of Maturity" and covers the years 1900 to 1950. Father Roemer admits that it is hardly possible to get the past ten years into proper perspective. It is indeed, but he does about as well with them as may be reasonably expected in his concluding chapter, "Secularism."

There are some omissions. Why did he fail to mention Dr. Zwierlein's *Life and Letters of Bishop McQuaid,* in my estimation possibly the most important work—at least recent work—in the field of American Catholic History? The reason may be that Dr. Zwierlein told too much, and Father Roemer tries to avoid anything unpleasant. Thus, though he cannot forebear praising Father Coughlin, in his next paragraph he gives almost equal praise to Monsignor John A. Ryan. As Monsignor Ryan was Father's Coughlin's severest critic—a fact not mentioned in this book—the two paragraphs safely cancel one another out. The enterprises of the Grail and of Dorothy Day's Houses of Hospitality are omitted, presumably because they are not of the kind to be listed in *The Official Catholic Directory,* upon the annual volumes of which Father Roemer has obviously leaned very heavily.

A writer can be fairly judged only by what he set out to do. Father Roemer carries out his purpose well-nigh to perfection, writing clearly and carefully and cautiously. And the book is printed in very readable type. But though he provides just enough narrative to hold his statistical facts together, this must be called a historical dictionary of the Church in America. A history, except in the barest, bleakest, most bloodless sense, it assuredly is not.

THEODORE MAYNARD.

Lincoln Collector. Carl Sandburg. Harcourt. $7.50.

IN THIS book of 344 pages Carl Sandburg discusses the Lincoln material collected by Oliver R. Barrett, a Chicago lawyer. One of the most tireless collectors in the nation, Mr. Barrett, who died on March 4 of this year, amassed one of the best, if not the very best of the deposits calculated to make the Lincoln era understandable.

Many of the letters were found more or less by chance. A Chicago schoolteacher heard that Mr. Barrett was a collector of letters written to and by Lincoln. She had a bundle of letters that had been given to her by her father. The latter had occupied a shop below Lincoln's law office in Springfield in February 1861, and had been given the letters by Lincoln, who had been about to burn them in the stove in the shop. These are the so-called "Hot Stove" letters, many of which are very interesting and one of which, written to Lincoln by Pete Muggins of Fillmore, Louisiana, on November 25, 1860, perhaps contains more profanity per square inch than any other letter preserved for historical purposes.

There are some other letters, referred to as the Bonfire Letters, exchanged by Lincoln and his wife in 1848. Like her husband, Mrs. Lincoln was burning letters and old papers one day early in 1861, preparing to leave Springfield for Washington. One of her neighbors, noticing the bonfire in the alley back of the Lincoln house approached Mrs. Lincoln and asked if she might rescue some of the unburned papers and was given permission to do so by Mrs. Lincoln. Eventually Mr. Barrett also added these papers to his collection.

Several letters deal candidly with the relationships existing in the Lincoln family. A letter of May 1849 tells of the desire of Lincoln's father, Thomas Lincoln, who was ill, that the son visit him, but the visit was not made. Lincoln wrote very caustically to his stepbrother, John D. Johnston, in 1851 but was not able to reform him. Sandburg's comments are helpful but not obtrusive. Many letters written by Lincoln's contemporaries are included. The volume will tell you much about the raw material out of which the tragic Civil War developed.

PAUL KINIERY.

The Catholic Story of Liberia. Martin J. Bane, S.M.A. McMullen. $2.50.

AN account of American missionary activity in the Negro Republic in West Africa—now resumed after an interval of a century.

• REVIEWERS •

JAMES RORTY is the author of *Our Master's Voice: Advertising,* and a contributor to *Harper's* and *The New Leader.*

THEODORE MAYNARD is the author of several books of poetry, history and biography. Among them are *Too Small A World,* and *The Story of American Catholicism.*

PAUL KINIERY is a dean in the graduate school at Loyola University in Chicago.

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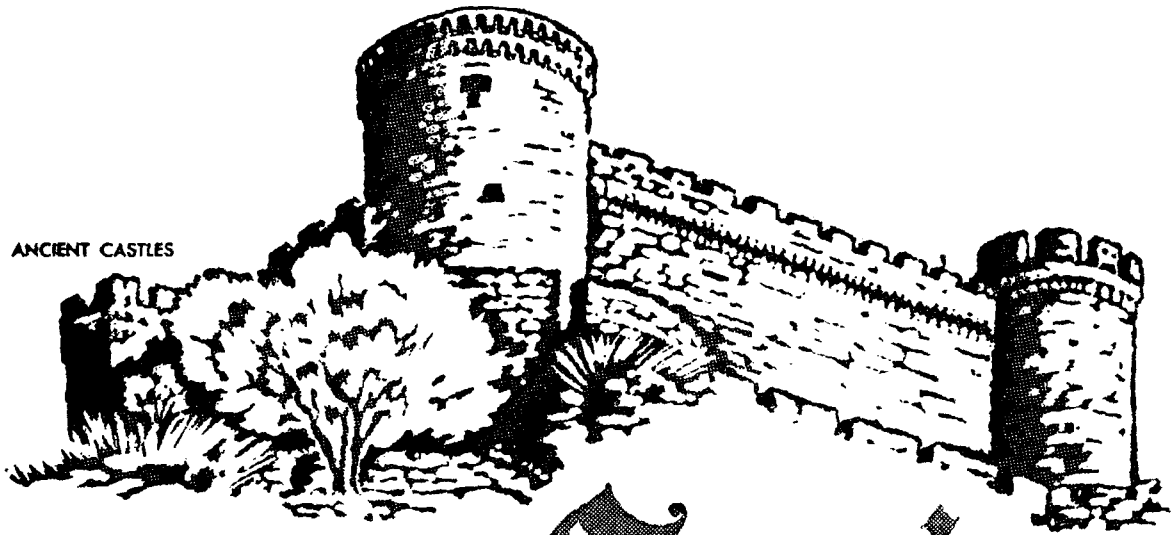

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